

Front Page Edit Page Other Page

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National Whirligig

By RAY TUCKER

WASHINGTON, April 25 — A complete review of contradictory intelligence reports on Russia's military strength will be conducted by the Senate Appropriations Committee before it acts on the Administration's request for \$44.4 billion, for national defense and foreign aid. Many specialists believe that it has been vastly overrated by Pentagon experts and Allen W. Dulles' overseas agents.

Pointing out that this field offers the most likely for budget and tax cuts, Senator Allan J. Ellender of Louisiana is responsible for the checkup, which will be the first of its kind since World War II. Based on information gathered on his trips throughout Russia in the last two years, Ellender told the committee at a recent secret session:

"I believe that we are getting bum intelligence information! I think that the whole question should be looked into before we proceed to expand as we are and to spend as we are!"

A great deal of the Louisiana Senator's testimony was so pertinent, and so different from official data, that it was eliminated from the published reports of the hearings as "classified." But Dr. James Doolittle, Chairman of the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, appears to share Ellender's views. He says:

"We would like to have more accurate information. But I would not write off the information which we have as wholly inaccurate."

In addition to data which he picked up inside Russia and the satellite states, Ellender has talked with Communist defectors including former officers in the Soviet Army and Air Force. They will be questioned by the full committee, as will Charles E. Bohlen, who has just returned from Moscow after serving as U. S. Ambassador there for four years.

Many other members of Congress are disturbed by contrasting evidence on the question of Russia's military might, especially as erroneous estimates have had a far-reaching and sometimes unfortunate effect on the Western Allies' foreign policies, especially the United States. Many believe that it has contributed to unjustified timidity in battling the Great Bear.

Defense Secretary Charles E. Wilson himself has conceded his own errors in this respect. He has downgraded previous estimates of Russian strength insofar as production of big bombers, fast pursuit planes and atomic weapons are concerned. His recent order cutting output of B-52's from 20 to 15 a month resulted from discovery of his mistakes.

Moreover, there is a growing belief that Allen Dulles' Central Information Agency has not lived up to the promises and hopes held out when this country's spying agencies were unified under his control. It is felt that they were outwitted in the attack on Indo-China by Ho Chi Minh's Reds, in the invasion of Egypt and in the Hungarian uprising.

Senator Carl Hayden of Arizona, Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman, has personal reasons for backing Senator Ellender's demand. As one of two Members of Congress who served in the Spanish-American War, he recalls this country's hysterical fear of Spain's might at a time when the erstwhile ruler of the Spanish Main was only a hollow, rotting snell in every way.

Russia's behavior, as recently noted here, lends support to doubt of her power. Despite her brutal reprisals in Hungary and her series of threats to European and Middle East members of NATO, the Kremlin has whined and scolded instead of taking military action.

Moscow obviously dreads the thought of present or prospective atomic encirclement. And, despite official denials, that is the current long-range strategy at Washington.

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